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METAL STUD BUILDING SYSTEM AND METHOD

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BACKGROUND:

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Vertical metal studs are widely used in building construction, particularly in conjunction with commercial buildings, for the non-load-bearing interior walls. The studs generally are covered with drywall which is attached to them to form the interior walls of the structure in which they are used.

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In the past, vertical metal studs in non-load-bearing interior walls of a building were connected directly between a track on the floor at their bottoms and a top track secured to the horizontal joists for floors or roofs of the building. Such construction has resulted in substantial problems, in that little if any vertical displacement of the floor or roof, at the top of the studs, could be tolerated.

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The fixed relationship of the non-load-bearing studs and the floors or roofs connected to the top ends of the studs results in longitudinal compressive stresses on the studs, which frequently causes the studs to buckle laterally at intermediate locations, creating cracks or distortions in the walls of the building in which they are used. These longitudinal forces applied to the studs result from vertical displacement of the floor or roof of the building above the studs. The fixed relationship of the non-load-bearing studs, in the case of variations in load for office floors above the rooms in which the studs are used, or in the case of a

1 heavy load of snow or the like on a roof, causes a significant
2 downward pressure on the vertical non-bearing studs. If the studs
3 are rigidly secured at both the top and bottom, between the floor
4 of the room and its ceiling, unsightly and unacceptable cracks
5 occur in the wall covering. In addition, the integral structure of
6 the wall is weakened as a result of the buckling or partial
7 buckling of the studs. When the load is lessened (in the case of
8 an office building, by all of the workers leaving at the end of a
9 day, or in the case of a roof, by the melting of snow), the cracks
10 in the walls increase as the walls expand in response to the
11 lessening vertical pressure on the studs. The studs themselves
12 undergo a stretching or lengthening after their earlier buckling,
13 which further contributes to the weakness of the wall.

14 Efforts to overcome the problems of a rigid interconnection
15 between vertical studs in non-bearing walls and the ceilings or
16 floors above them, by allowing relative movement of the ceiling or
17 floor with respect to the studs, have been made. One effort is
18 disclosed in the United States patent to Gilmour No. 5,040,345.
19 This patent is directed to the addition of a stud clip to the head
20 track for allowing vertical floating movement of a floor or roof
21 structure above the stud to take place. The clip has a pair of
22 opposing flanges, which are secured directly to the downwardly
23 depending flanges of the head track. Another portion of the clip
24 is inset slightly from the inner surface of the head track flanges.
25 This inset portion includes grooves which accommodate the inwardly
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1 turned flanges on a standard stud. This allows the stud to slide
2 up and down over the exterior of the clip between it and the
3 flanges of the head track. The system is designed so that the
4 length of the stud extends into or nestles within the downwardly
5 turned flanges of the head track. If the clip were to be extended
6 beyond these downwardly depending flanges, it would interfere with
7 the attachment of drywall to the stud, since portions of the clip
8 directly underlie the inwardly edges of the stud. There also is no
9 provision in this patent for allowing sliding movement of drywall
10 portions relative to one another; so that drywall necessarily would
11 need to be spaced a sufficient distance below the downwardly turned
12 edges of the head track to accommodate the expected vertical
13 movement in the finished installation. This in turn allows sound
14 to travel over the top of the drywall portions of the walls, from
15 one room to another.

16 A different approach to the problem is disclosed in the United
17 States patent to DeFrancesco No. 5,685,121. As with the Gilmour
18 patent mentioned above, the system of DeFrancesco also does not
19 provide any provision for drywall overlap; so that sound can travel
20 over the top of a wall built with this system. In DeFrancesco, a
21 clip is designed for a slip fit within the open end of a stud. The
22 clip includes an outwardly flared portion at the top, which then is
23 secured to the flanges of the head track. The clip is designed to
24 extend a substantial distance downwardly into the open end of the
25 stud; and it includes elongated slots in its sides. The slots are
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1 designed to accommodate fasteners for drywall, which then may be
2 passed through the studs and into the slots to permit the slip fit
3 movement. The system, however, does not allow for drywall butt
4 joints. Such joints will result in fasteners located on opposite
5 sides of the slots; and if such a butt joint were to be secured in
6 the area of the clip, the fasteners would secure the clip and the
7 stud together in a non-movable relationship. This would defeat the
8 purpose of the whole system. In addition, the system of
9 DeFrancesco, as well as the system of Gilmour, preclude the running
10 of any conduit through the wide or inside portion of the studs,
11 since the clips of both of these patents completely overlie this
12 portion. Consequently, no conduit could be run through the
13 stud/clip assembly without securing the parts together. If conduit
14 is run immediately below the clip, the relative vertical movement
15 which is desired would be prevented, or severing of the conduit
16 (and the wires within it) could result. As a consequence, the
17 structures of both Gilmour and DeFrancesco clearly limit the
18 location of any conduit running through the interior of the wall to
19 a position substantially removed from the clip assembly itself.

20 The patents to Becker Nos. 5,471,805 and 5,755,066 disclose a
21 head track configuration with stepped surfaces to allow drywall
22 overlap. This permits drywall attached to the header to slide over
23 drywall attached to the studs which extend up into the header.
24 This feature in the Becker patents provides a fire barrier
25 connection, as well as a sound barrier. The disclosure of the
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1 Becker patents, however, does not show any guide whatsoever to hold
2 the studs against tipping or shifting within the header. The studs
3 are not held vertically within the header; and the only thing which
4 holds the studs in their correct orientation is the connection of
5 the drywall itself. The studs do not extend all the way to abut
6 the header; so that limited vertical movement between the header
7 and the top of the studs is permitted with this structure, allowing
8 the overlapping drywall to slidably provide the necessary fire
9 barrier. In the event of an earthquake, however, the studs are not
10 held against lateral movement (particularly longitudinally of the
11 header); so that the wall structure is subject to substantial
12 damage in the event of an earthquake.

13 The United States patent to Mieyal No. 4,397,127 discloses a
14 stud extension with a slip fit onto the stud to then allow the stud
15 to be interconnected with a suitable header. This extension allows
16 a slip fit of the stud on the extension; but the extension itself
17 has snap tabs on it to connect into the header. This requires
18 additional manufacturing steps.

19 The United States patent to Greenwood No. 5,146,723 is
20 directed to an interior wall mounting device for providing a
21 cosmetic interconnection between drywall sections which are
22 vertically mounted on studs in the wall, and, in some cases,
23 interconnections between drywall interfaces at both the ceiling and
24 in corners of the room. The mounting devices are in the form of
25 elongated parts which provide surfaces acting as crown molding,

1 corner molding, or the like, in the finished construction. The
2 structure disclosed in this patent, however, is not directed to
3 slip fit interconnections between a head track and vertical studs
4 to allow relative movements between the two.

5 Accordingly, it is an object of this invention to provide an
6 improved stud and clip assembly which overcomes the disadvantages
7 of the prior art, which effectively provides alignment for the
8 studs while allowing relative movement between head track and the
9 studs, and which allows a non-interfering location for the various
10 components to allow standard connection of drywall and conduit
11 passage at any location on the stud.

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13 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION:

14 It is an object of this invention to provide an improved stud
15 assembly system and method for permitting relative vertical
16 movement between the ceiling or roof of a structure and the stud.

17 It is another object of this invention to provide an improved
18 stud and clip assembly for use with metal studs to allow relative
19 vertical movement between the roof or floor of the building in
20 which the stud is located and the stud through slid able
21 interconnections between elements of the clip and the stud which do
22 not interfere with conventional construction utilization of the
23 stud.

24 It is an additional object of this invention to provide an
25 improved metal stud and clip assembly for metal studs used in non-

1 load-bearing walls to secure the stud against lateral displacement
2 while allowing relative vertical movement between the stud and the
3 ceiling or floor to which the stud is attached.

4 It is a further object of this invention to provide an
5 improved stud and stud clip assembly and method of installation for
6 installing metal studs in a non-load-bearing wall to allow relative
7 sliding movement between the clip and the stud to eliminate
8 potentially damaging stresses from being applied to the stud.

9 In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention, a
10 metal stud and clip assembly for use in a non-load-bearing wall is
11 designed to allow a horizontal ceiling or floor to vertically float
12 on the wall. The assembly includes an elongated metal stud member
13 which has a generally U-shaped cross section including a main
14 portion, and first and second edges having first and second side
15 members attached thereto. At least a first receiver is attached to
16 the main portion of the stud member; and it is spaced inwardly a
17 predetermined distance from the first and second side members. A
18 clip member has a first portion for attachment to a surface located
19 above the stud; and it also has at least a first elongated
20 stabilizing bar attached to it and extending downwardly to slidably
21 engage the first receiver on the stud member. This allows relative
22 vertical movement between the stud member and the stabilizing bar.

23 To install the stud and clip assembly in a non-load-bearing
24 wall, the stabilizing bar of the clip member first is extended into
25 the receiver on the stud to allow relative sliding movement between
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1 the bar and the receiver. The stud and the clip member then are
2 positioned in the construction of a non-load-bearing wall; and the
3 clip member is extended upwardly for attachment to a ceiling or
4 floor above the stud.

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6 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS:

7 Figure 1 is a front perspective view of a portion of a
8 preferred embodiment of the invention;

9 Figure 2 is a front perspective view of another portion of a
10 preferred embodiment of the invention;

11 Figure 3 is a top perspective view of an element used in
12 conjunction with the preferred embodiment of the invention;

13 Figure 4 is a partial cross-sectional side view of a wall
14 structure employing a preferred embodiment of the invention;

15 Figure 5 is a partial front perspective view of a structure of
16 a preferred embodiment of the invention illustrating details
17 thereof; and

18 Figure 6 is a cross-sectional configuration of an alternative
19 use of a preferred embodiment of the invention, illustrating other
20 features of the invention.

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22 DETAILED DESCRIPTION:

23 Reference now should be made to the drawings, in which the
24 same or similar components are designated by the same reference
25 numbers throughout the different figures. Figure 1 is a front

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1 perspective view of a metal stud made of galvanized steel, extruded
2 aluminum or other suitable material, which incorporates the
3 features of a preferred embodiment of the invention.

4 The stud 10 and has a generally U-shaped cross section. The
5 bight of the cross section is a main member 12, typically located
6 on the interior of a wall in which the stud 10 is used. The
7 longitudinal edges of the member 12 have attached to them a pair of
8 side members 14 and 18. The side members 14 and 18 may be
9 integrally formed with the main member 12, or may be separately
10 attached in accordance with known manufacturing techniques. As is
11 typical with studs of this type, the free edges of the side members
12 14 and 18 are inwardly turned at 16 and 20, respectively. This
13 portion of the metal stud which has been described is conventional;
14 and the dimensional characteristics of the stud are identical to
15 those of conventional studs not incorporating the invention.

16 The stud of Figure 1, however, has been modified to include
17 first and second receivers or receiver channels 22 and 24 attached
18 to the main portion 12 and spaced inwardly from the side members 14
19 and 18, as is readily apparent from an examination of Figure 1.
20 The receivers 22 and 24 are in the form of hollow elongated
21 rectangular cross-sectional channels, which extend parallel to the
22 edges of the main portion 12, or parallel to the longitudinal
23 dimension of the stud 10.

24 The hollow receiver channels 22 and 24 are spaced inwardly
25 from the edges 14 and 18 a distance sufficient to permit the

1 interconnection of standard drywall surfaces, corner beads and the
2 like without interference. In addition, sufficient space is
3 provided between the receiver channels 22 and 24 to allow the
4 passage of conduit through the main member 12 in this space between
5 the channels without interfering with the channels or the operation
6 of those channels, as subsequently described.

7 Figures 2 and 3 are perspective views of a slip clip assembly
8 and a ceiling track assembly for utilization in conjunction with
9 the stud of the invention shown in Figure 1. In Figure 3, a
10 ceiling track of the type typically used in metal stud
11 construction, to provide a guide or channel for the upper ends of
12 the studs in non-load-bearing walls, is illustrated. The track or
13 guide channel of Figure 3, however, has been modified to
14 accommodate a feature of the invention described in greater detail
15 subsequently.

16 The ceiling track comprises an elongated flat upper surface 40
17 designed to be attached to a ceiling or floor located above the
18 wall in which the stud 10 of Figure 1 is to be used. The channel
19 of the track is formed by a pair of spaced apart downwardly
20 depending flanges 42 and 44, which serve as guides for the stud
21 assembly to be described. In addition, a second pair of downwardly
22 depending flanges 46 and 48, shorter in length than the flanges 42
23 and 44, are provided along the edges of the portion 40.

24 Figure 2 illustrates a slip fit clip assembly designed for use
25 in conjunction with the ceiling track of Figure 3 and the stud 10

1 of Figure 1. The slip fit clip includes an upper portion 30 and
2 two downwardly extending flanges 32 and 34. These flanges 32 and
3 34 are designed to fit inside the flanges 42 and 44, and are
4 designed to be attached to the flanges 42 and 44 by means of
5 suitable connectors. In the alternative, the surface 30 is
6 designed to be attached by means of suitable fasteners to the
7 channel 40. Prior to attachment of the clip assembly of Figure 2
8 into the ceiling track 40 of Figure 3, however, a pair of parallel
9 elongated stabilizing bars 36 and 38, attached to the edge of the
10 portion 30, and extending from it, are extended into the respective
11 channels 24 and 22 of the stud shown in Figure 1, and are slid
12 downwardly into those channels. The outer dimensions of the
13 stabilizing bars 36 and 38 are selected to snugly but slidably fit
14 within the interior openings of the receiver channels 22 and 24.

15 Reference now should be made to Figure 4, which illustrates a
16 typical wall construction and which shows, on the left and right
17 halves thereof, different relative vertical orientations of the
18 various parts of a preferred embodiment of the invention installed
19 into a typical wall. As shown in Figure 4, a stud (one of many of
20 which are used in a non-bearing interior wall) is shown as
21 interconnected between an upper ceiling or floor 50 and a bottom
22 floor 52. It should be noted that in the ensuing description, the
23 word "ceiling" can mean any surface or member which is located above
24 the non-bearing wall with which the invention is used and
25 interconnected. It can be the horizontal joists of a roof truss,

1 or it may simply be the lower side of a floor in a multi-story
2 building.

3 In Figure 4, a U-shaped channel 60 is secured to the floor by
4 means of suitable fasteners 61 in the location of the wall which is
5 to be constructed. The lower end of the stud 12/14/18 is attached
6 to upturned flanges of the channel 60 by means of suitable
7 fasteners 63, which extend through the upturned flanges of the
8 channel 60 into the corresponding side members 14 and 18 of a
9 typical stud used in the structure. Once this connection has been
10 made, the clip 30/32/34, which has been pre-assembled with the stud
11 with the stabilizer bars 36 and 38 inserted into the openings in
12 the receiver channels 24 and 22, respectively, is moved upwardly to
13 engage the lower surface of the guide channel 40, which has been
14 secured to the ceiling 50 by any suitable manner. It should be
15 noted that the upper end of the stud 12/14/18 is located below the
16 lower edges of the downwardly extending flanges 42 and 44 (as
17 viewed in the left-hand portion of Figure 4) to accommodate
18 relative vertical movement between the floor 50 and the top of the
19 stud.

20 When the location of the elements is such that the stud is
21 properly vertically oriented, the clip 30 is slid upwardly into
22 place to engage the lower surface of the channel 40 and the parts
23 are secured together by means of suitable fasteners, as described
24 previously. This allows the stabilizer bars 36 and 38 to extend
25 downwardly into the top open ends of the respective channels 24 and

1 22, as illustrated in Figure 4.

2 Initially, the relative spacing shown on the left-hand side of
3 the broken line in Figure 4 shows the orientation of the various
4 parts of the assembly. A suitable surface, such as drywall 68, is
5 applied to the left-hand side of the stud to form the surface of
6 the wall defined by a row of studs, such as the stud shown in
7 Figure 4. As shown, the drywall 68 is attached by means of
8 suitable fasteners 70; and it is readily apparent that the
9 fasteners 70 completely clear the receiver channels 22 and 24
10 without any interference. Similarly, drywall 72 is attached to the
11 right-hand side. To provide for a suitable sound and fire barrier,
12 additional strips of drywall, such as the drywall strips 62 and 64
13 shown on opposite sides of the stud are attached to the flanges 46
14 and 48 by means of suitable fasteners, such as the fasteners 66
15 shown in the left-hand portion of Figure 4. These drywall strips
16 slidably overlap the corresponding drywall sheets 68 and 72, as
17 illustrated in Figure 4, to permit relative vertical movement
18 between the sheets 62 and 68 and the sheets 64 and 72. It should
19 be noted that the spacing between the flanges 42/46 and the flanges
20 44/48 is selected to permit a snug overlapping relationship between
21 the drywall segments 62/68 and 64/72.

22 Reference now should be made to the right-hand side of Figure
23 4, which essentially shows a split of a stud and all of the other
24 structure vertically to illustrate the relative orientation of the
25 parts when the ceiling 50 sags downwardly toward the top edge of

1 the stud 12/14/18. As shown in the right-hand portion of Figure 4,
2 the space between the top of the stud and the inside of the clip 30
3 is substantially less than the space shown in the left-hand portion
4 of Figure 4, which illustrates the normal or installed relative
5 spacing of the components. It should be noted in conjunction with
6 Figure 4 that the utilization of the split drawing configuration is
7 done for the purpose of conserving drawing space, and that both
8 sides of a stud simultaneously incur either the spacing shown in
9 the left-hand side of Figure 4, or that shown in the right-hand
10 side of Figure 4 as the ceiling 50 moves downwardly and back up
11 again, as the load on it varies.

12 Figure 5 is a partially cut away perspective view of a
13 completed assembly in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the
14 invention. In the embodiment shown in Figure 5, the ceiling track
15 40 is illustrated as having only the two flanges 42 and 44 secured
16 to it. This configuration may be used any time the overlapping
17 drywall feature described above in conjunction with Figure 4 is not
18 desired. The remainder of the assembly shown in Figure 5, however,
19 is identical to that described previously in conjunction with
20 Figures 1 through 4, and operates in the same manner as the
21 embodiments illustrated in Figures 1 through 4. The stud, ceiling
22 track and clip assembly are the same as described previously; and
23 the orientation and operation of the various parts is as previously
24 described.

25 Figure 5, however, further illustrates the manner in which the
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1 receiver channels 22 and 24, along with the stabilizer bars 38 and
2 36, are located to preclude interference from the interconnection
3 of drywall sheets such as the sheets 68 and 82 to either the sides
4 or ends (the flat surface or main portion 12 of the stud 10), as
5 illustrated. Typically, when drywall sheets are attached, the
6 fasteners 70 and 84 at the edges are located in the areas
7 illustrated. It is readily apparent that whether a sheet 82 is
8 applied to the main or flat portion 12 of the stud 10, or whether
9 a sheet 68 is attached to the edge or side member, such as the
10 member 18, the fasteners are completely free of any interference
11 with the receiver channels 22 and 24, and therefore, with the
12 slidably inserted stabilizing bars 38 and 36. This also is true of
13 corner beading, such as the beading 86 which is typically applied
14 over joints at a corner of the type illustrated in Figure 5. Any
15 fasteners which are used to secure the corner bead 86 over the ends
16 of the drywall sheets 68 and 82 completely clear the receiver
17 channels 22 and 24.

18 Finally, it should be noted that, as illustrated in Figure 5,
19 conventional conduit 81 may be passed through circular openings 80
20 formed in the main portion 12 of the studs between the receiver
21 channels 22 and 24 without interfering in any way with the relative
22 vertical sliding movement between the stabilizing bars 36 and 38
23 and the receiver channels 24 and 22. As a consequence, the
24 structure of the preferred embodiment of the invention allows
25 conventional construction techniques to be utilized with respect to

1 other standard elements of wall and conduit structure without
2 regard to the location of the clip receiver channels or stabilizing
3 bars.

4 Figure 6 illustrates a general structural configuration of the
5 type which may be used in conjunction with the wall and ceiling
6 structure described in conjunction with Figures 1 though 5. In
7 addition, Figure 6 illustrates an alternative to the use of the
8 clip and receiver channel configuration of the studs for providing
9 extensions of studs for particular structural installations. In
10 the embodiment shown in Figure 6, two interior walls including a
11 pair of studs or stud assemblies are shown in an end view of those
12 walls, taken in cross section at some point between the studs. The
13 structure shown includes a room with a suspended interior ceiling
14 100 on the left-hand side of the structure, a suspended ceiling 114
15 in a hallway or room between the two walls formed by the studs, and
16 a suspended ceiling 118 in a room on the right-hand side of the
17 structure shown in Figure 6. The ceiling heights of all of these
18 suspended ceilings, as measured from the floor 52, are different.

19 The studs of the walls in the embodiment shown in Figure 6 are
20 attached through channels 60 to the floor 52 in the manner
21 described previously in conjunction with Figure 4. At the top, a
22 mounting clip 30 is illustrated as secured directly to the
23 structural ceiling 50. It is obvious from an examination of Figure
24 6, that the structural ceiling 50 is located a substantial distance
25 above the suspended ceilings 100/114/118, described previously.

1 The structure may be the same as described in conjunction with
2 Figure 4; or it may include stud extensions still utilizing the
3 unique features of the clip and stabilizing bars 36 and 38 shown in
4 Figure 2.

5 To utilize the system as a stud extender, short lengths of
6 studs, such as shown by means of the upper side members 14 and 18
7 on both of the left-hand and right-hand wall configurations, may be
8 secured directly to the flanges 32 and 34 of the clip 30 at their
9 upper ends. The stabilizer bars 36 and 38 extend downwardly
10 through the respective receiver channels 24 and 22 in the manner
11 described previously, and extend all of the way through the length
12 of the upper segments of studs shown in Figure 6. Longer studs,
13 illustrated by the side members 14A and 18A in both the left-hand
14 and right-hand interior walls of Figure 6, then are located in
15 longitudinal alignment with the upper segments; and the stabilizer
16 bars 36 and 38 extend from the upper stud segments through a space
17 provided between the upper and lower segments into the
18 corresponding channels 22A and 24A of the lower stud segments, as
19 illustrated in Figure 7.

20 The gap between each of the upper stud segment and the lower
21 primary studs is selected to be sufficient to allow for relative
22 vertical movement between the ceiling 50 and the floor 52, in the
23 manner described previously. Fire and sound barriers may be
24 provided by elongated strips of drywall 90 and 92 attached to only
25 the upper stud side members 18 and 14, respectively, as illustrated

1 in Figure 7, and slidably engaging the upper edges or surfaces of
2 the side members 14A and 18A of the lower or main studs.

3 As illustrated, the suspended ceiling 100 is suspended from
4 the primary structural ceiling 50 by means of hangers 102; and the
5 ceiling 118 is suspended by means of hangers 120. In the narrow or
6 hallway section of the structure shown in Figure 6, there typically
7 are located a variety of conduits, pipes, heating/cooling chases,
8 and the like. These are illustrated as conduit and water pipes
9 112, which are located on an interior frame 104, suspended from the
10 ceiling 50 by means of hangers 106. This area also may include
11 larger duct work 110 and air conditioning or other conventional
12 duct work 110, which may extend perpendicularly into the plane of
13 the drawing sheet of Figure 6, or laterally out into the space
14 between the suspended ceiling 118 and the structural ceiling 50.
15 In any event, relative movement of the ceiling 50 and the various
16 suspended ceilings 100/104/114 and 118, with respect to the floor,
17 takes place by decreasing and increasing the open space between the
18 stud segments illustrated in detail in Figure 7, to allow this
19 movement without placing any stress on the shortened stud segments
20 or the elongated segments shown in Figure 6. Consequently, the
21 stud and clip assembly of Figures 1 and 2 is highly versatile for
22 a variety of different installation purposes, as described above in
23 conjunction with all of the various figures.

24 The foregoing description of the preferred embodiment of the
25 invention is to be considered illustrative and not as limiting.

1 Various materials may be used to form the different parts of the
2 invention; and the manner of forming and fabricating these
3 different parts and/or materials together may be varied by those
4 skilled in the art, without departing from the true scope of the
5 invention. Various other changes and modifications will occur to
6 those skilled in the art for performing substantially the same
7 function, in substantially the same way, to achieve substantially
8 the same result without departing from the true scope of the
9 invention as defined in the appended claims.

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